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## Q&A: Cindy Clinton with Music City Children's Museum

The nonprofit organization is now looking for a location, accepting pledges

HANNAH HERNER

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Cindy Clinton started her quest to bring a children's museum to Nashville six years ago. The retired teacher is encouraged by the five or 10 emails per day she receives from people with suggestions for exhibits, hoping to subscribe to the newsletter, donating to the effort or just to showing support for the idea.



Cindy Clinton

Nashville appears to be one of a few U.S. cities that does not yet have a designated children's museum, which Clinton explained will focus on a younger demographic than the Adventure Science Center. (In Tennessee alone, Memphis, Chattanooga and Knoxville have children's museum.)

"We have a lot of great examples ahead of us," Clinton told the *Post*. "That's the good thing about being last."

In November, the nonprofit Children's Museum Development Group started a pledge campaign, and the group is concurrently looking to secure a location for what would be the **Music City Children's Museum**. Clinton said the campaign is to show how many people are invested in this idea, beyond a dollar amount. She sat down with the *Post* to discuss her vision for the museum.

**Is there an age group that you're focusing on?**

Ninety percent of your brain is developed by age 5. We need to get all those learning experiences because experiences are really the foundation for reading and understanding what you're reading. The discovery, the role playing, how they explore, how they make decisions on how to do something in the Children's Museum, how to solve problems — believe it or not, they do all those things while they're playing.

Considering problems with the older kids not wanting to stay in school, we need to start at that preschool age and really build up a foundation for them. All our kids aren't having families that can read to them at night, that can take them places — we have children that don't have those luxuries. A children's museum can step in and really fill the gaps.

### **Do you have a plan to include lower-income kids?**

This is great for tourists and this is great for the middle class, et cetera, but the children that really need this are underserved children. There is a **Museums for All** initiative we're participating in, which is about bringing children [receiving SNAP benefits] to visit the museum for free.

It's important to us to have good bus routes. In other cities, there are companies that will sponsor buses to go to community centers and help get children to the children's museum. We're all about wanting to be part of the community, to be a community hub. We plan to get out into the community and bring programs. Where we see a need and if we're able to fill the gap, that's what we want to do.

### **What are some examples of exhibits the museum may have?**

Most of them all have a little city within the children's museum where we would have banks and medical centers and car care centers and restaurants and post offices and veterinarians.

In a water area, we would do a replica of the Cumberland River. There would be barges where the kids could take cranes and load things on the barge. We would hope to have a General Jackson that they could climb on and guide down the river.

You would have an area that's very physical where they could climb apparatuses and they might do dance games. We would love to see little driving cars — a newsroom where somebody can do the cameras, somebody can be up in front of the green screen doing the

weather. Then you've got your musical area with all kinds of musical instruments. We would like to have a recording studio

Part of this is careers, planting seeds for them to say "wow, I really like being a doctor. I really like being a weather person." Kids love to role play what they see adults doing.

### **What do you hope kids take from this experience?**

It teaches them to work with other people. It's peer to peer. The parents and the children are working with parents and children from another neighborhood that they might not normally ever meet in a safe, inclusive environment where everybody's just having fun.

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### **Hannah Herner**

Hannah Herner joined the Nashville Post to cover health care in 2022. She previously worked for The Contributor street paper and freelanced for the Nashville Scene.